Oxford House, Inc.
4911 Aurora Drive
Kensington, Maryland 20895
March 7, 1989

Bruce A. Ault, Chairperson
Commission on Alcoholism
County of Los Angeles
313 North Figueroa Street
Los Angeles, California 90012

Dear Bruce:

I enjoyed meeting you at the San Diego conference and well remember your interest and enthusiasm for starting some Oxford Houses in Los Angeles. We stand ready to be of any help we can.

You asked for more information on how to start a house in Los Angeles. There isn't an exact procedure for starting a house. Each one seems to vary and we do what is necessary each time on a keep it as simple as we can basis.

For instance, sometimes we find a house first and then find recovering people to live in it. Sometimes we have several recovering people who band together and then locate a house. Either way works just fine. There is an large abundance of people wanting to live in Oxford Houses.

Nor does it matter who signs the lease or whose name the utilities are in. I have personally signed leases as have others who live in Oxford Houses or house alumni. The objective is to get a house started and have it run using procedures outlined in the Oxford House Manual, a copy of which I will enclose. Once a house is running it doesn't matter who signed the lease.

There are, however, factors that make houses work better, such as proximity to public transportation, shopping, banking and AA and NA meetings. Being in a good neighborhood where crime isn't a worry is helpful. By putting people two to a room we can afford to rent in virtually any neighborhood.

~~I will enclose a dated but still pertinent few pages on "How to Start an Oxford House."~~ *Oxford House Manual explains how . . . . .*

We would be delighted for any group in Los Angeles that wants to live by the Oxford House system -- democratically-run, self-supporting, and alcohol and drug-free -- to affiliate with Oxford House, Inc. We will issue a charter to any such group and they will then be included under the Oxford House corporate umbrella. This includes IRS 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status. The only cost has been $2 per person per month to the corporation to pay for postage and such. This has been voluntary and is scheduled to rise to $5 per month per person over the next three years.

There are two options for getting the first house or two started in Los Angeles.

The first is to read the material and do it on your own. In such a case I will do all I can to assist by telephone or letter.

The second is to have people who live in or have lived in Oxford Houses come to Los Angeles and locate and lease the first house or two, find the people to live in them, collect furniture, indoctrinate the new residents and set up a system of quality control to assure that they remain alcohol and drug-free.

During the past couple of months Oxford House, Inc. has assembled a staff capable of providing this service and is set to have people visit and establish houses in cities that would then become models for others.

For a cost of about $20,000 we would initially send two people to Los Angeles, myself or Paul Molloy, another co-founder of Oxford House, and a person who lives in or has recently lived in a house and is capable of providing technical assistance.

The senior person would stay for a week during which he would explain the Oxford House system to city officials, find and lease a house and explain the system to the landlord, and talk to the various public and private alcohol and drug treatment providers like the Veterans Administration hospital which would be sources of residents.

The senior person would leave behind for four weeks a technical assistant who would collect the furniture from donations, oversee the start-up of the new house and indoctrinate the new residents on the self-help system, and make contacts in the recovery community so that Oxford House could be alerted if the house isn't run right.

At the end of the five weeks the house ought to be full and running according to the Oxford House system and there shouldn't be any further problems that residents can't handle on their own. During that time there might also be time to locate a second house and get it in the works.

If you have an interest in the second method, let me know and I'll have our finance guy send you details. Or call me at (301) 933-6251.

I'll be in San Diego again next month for the conference on the social model and hope to see you there. If you want to get together any time before or after the conference in Los Angeles, please let me know pretty soon so I can make travel arrangements.

Yours sincerely,

John

John V. O'Neill